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INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1906
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1879
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1915
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SUBJECT: CONTRACTUAL ISSUES IMPEDE CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS AT THE
KHIRMANJO TAJIK-AFGHAN BORDER POST; VISIBLE PROGRESS AT BAKHORAT

REF: DUSHANBE 1945

CLASSIFIED BY: Tracey Jacobson, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy
Dushanbe, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) EmbOffs along with General Zuhurov, Chairman of the State Border Protection Committee surveyed the Tajik-Afghan border posts of Khirmanjo, Bakhorat and Bog November 15 and discovered slow progress at two of the three U.S.-funded renovation sites. Contractual issues impede substantive progress at Khirmanjo, where the contractor used fragile mud bricks, rather than U.S.-standard stone bricks to construct post buildings. Construction at Bakhorat showed visible progress since EmbOffs previous visit October 18. Border guards still have only limited equipment to detect and detain those attempting to illegally cross the border. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL)-funded interior and exterior reconstruction has commenced at Khirmanjo. However an inspection of completed work thus far revealed the contractor used mud bricks to construct base buildings, rather than the U.S.-preferred stone bricks, to which General Zuhurov expressed his personal displeasure. The contractor ignored a November 5 INL request to immediately suspend building operations, and has continued constructing buildings using the less-sturdy mud material. Despite these shortcomings, Zuhurov preferred to correct the existing structural deficiencies rather than cancel the entire contract. The Embassy's local staff reviewed the Statement of Work (SOW) with the local contractor during our visit to reiterate the SOW's explicit requirements.

¶3. (SBU) We witnessed visible progress at Bakhorat, since our last visit on October 18. The contractor had installed new windows, doors and electricity in the soldier's barracks and new tiling in the bathhouse. The situation at the Bog border post had not changed since October 18.

SECURITY

¶4. (SBU) Khirmanjo has one guard tower which overlooks the Tajik-Afghan border and protects the 45 soldiers currently living at the border post. Caves were visible on the Afghan side of the border, where narco-traffickers hide before crossing

the border into Tajikistan at night. The guards still do not have night-vision goggles to detect or interdict nocturnal crossings. General Zuhurov also expressed his personal concern over this issue. Per reftel, the Embassy delivered over 5,000 units of winter clothing to the Tajik Border Guards headquarters in Dushanbe in September 2006, which have not yet been delivered to the border posts. Post plans to avoid these problems with distribution of night vision equipment, by directly delivering the night-vision goggles during our next trip to these outposts. We hope in this manner to cut through the Tajik government red tape.

15. (C) COMMENT: Post did not have a great deal of interaction with the local soldiers, and it was difficult to ask them specific questions about their daily living conditions, due to the presence of General Zuhurov. The Khirmanjo border post renovation is an INL cost-saving pilot project. Using local contractors to renovate this post is expected to cost approximately \$200,000, while employing U.S. contractors for the same work would cost approximately \$1,200,000. While there are steps that must be taken to ensure the quality of work performed is comparable, Post hopes these immense cost savings of approximately \$1 million per border post will free up additional funds which could be allocated to future border post projects. END COMMENT.

JACOBSON